

127
Charity of Temper.

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at.

St. *Nicholas's* Church

I N

GREAT YARMOUTH,

November the 5th. 1731.

By THOMAS MACRO, D. D. *K*
Minister of *YARMOUTH*.

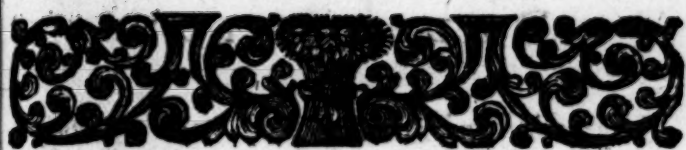
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To the Right Worshipful

The M A Y O R,

The Worshipful

The J U S T I C E S,

The A L D E R M E N;

A N D

C O M M O N - C O U N C I L - M E N

O F

R E A T T A R M O U T H.

G E N T L E M E N,



THE Reason of prefixing Your Name to this Discourse is, because it wants, not because I think it deserves your Patronage. What Merit it has, your Approbation has given it. And thus, you have made it entirely your own; for your Requests and Commands, and coming from You, are to meet with Obedience from Me.

DEDICATION.

I heartily wish the Event may answer my Design in preaching, your Opinion upon hearing, and your Desire to have, rather than hear it again.

The first Sermon is yours, at your own Request; and the second, which is added to complete the Subject, offers itself to you, at mine.

I have this to say for both, That the Principle there treated, wheresoever it prevails, will at once happily govern the Counsels and Determinations of publick Bodies, and the private Conduct of particular Persons.

I am, under a due Sense of your many Favours,

Your much Oblig'd

Humble Servant,

Yarmouth,
Dec. 24.
1731.

THO. MACROB.



1 C O R. xiii. 3.

*Though I bestow all my Goods to feed
the Poor, and though I give my
Body to be burned, and have not
Charity, it profiteth me nothing.*

THE Words are taken out of the comparative Part of that excellent and noble Description which the Apostle hath given us of *Charity*; the Perfection of all *Vir-*ues, superior to all supernatural Gifts, in failure of which, the *Faith* of a *Christian* unacceptable, and Righteousness of Life together vain.

The Power of doing the greatest and most astonishing Miracles, *the removing of Mountains*; the most enlarg'd Abilities of Understanding, *the speaking with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, and having the Gift of Prophecy*; the Perseverance and Integrity held fast

fast even unto Death, parting with *Life* rather than with *Faith*, the giving our own *Body to be burned*; the largest Profusion of *Wealth*, even to leaving oneself destitute, giving all our *Goods to feed the Poor*; all these Things are here suppos'd possible to subsist apart from a true *Love of God*, and of *Man* for his Sake, and where they ever did, or do, they are of no Account in *God's Sight*, and will avail nothing towards the obtaining His Approbation and Favour: These, however excellent, and valuable Qualifications they might seem, if strictly enquir'd into, were very defective, and imperfect; lighter than nothing and Vanity itself, if put into the Balance against true and real *Charity*, to which the Apostle attributes the Sum and Substance, the Life and Essence of Religion.

Ambition and Obstinacy, Bigotry and Superstition have carried Men to great Lengths in renouncing Property, and even sacrificing Life; but 'tis Love or Benignity of Mind that makes the Act virtuous and rewardable in the Doer, and the want of This alone is enough to vitiate our very Alms, and eclipse the Glory of *Martyrdom* itself.

Though I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and though I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profiteth me nothing.

In farther treating this Subject I shall consider,

First,

First, The Nature and Obligation, the Extent, and Excellency of *Charity*.

Secondly, I shall enquire (and the present *Occasion* calls for such an Enquiry) how the *Church of Rome* hath receiv'd this Direction of the Apostle, and practis'd this great Duty; whether she hath *earnestly coveted this best Gift*, and walked in this *most excellent Way*.

First, Let us view the Nature and Obligation, the Extent and Excellency of *Charity*.

The Notices and Judgment of Things, which Man, consider'd as a rational Creature, is, by the Strength and Direction of that Reason, able to form, will thus far evidently convince every fair and impartial Enquirer, that mutual *Benevolence*, and a kind Care and Concern for the Species, is the primary Law of human Nature, and that, without which Society falls into Confusion, the Order of Things is inverted, and the good Man, who out of the good Treasure of his Heart might bring forth good Things, Acts of Kindness and Forbearance, delightful to the Giver, and beneficial to the Receiver, thus corrupted by Ill-nature, and poison'd with the Desire of doing Mischief, becomes worse than a Beast of Prey to his fellow-Creatures, superior in Cunning and Watch-

Watchfulness of every Occasion to do Evil, tho' not equal in Strength to the *Lion* that goeth about seeking whom he may devour.

Thus far natural Light instructs 'how rational a Thing it is in itself, and how acceptable to the Reflection of a Man's own Mind, to be ever exercis'd in the Performance of humane and good-natur'd Acts, and wisely choosing the Character of *Friend* rather than *Enemy* to Mankind. *Can a Man hate his own Flesh?* is a Question that carries its own Answer in the strongest and most pathetick Negative; And the Affirmative would surely be the greatest Absurdity, the most false and malicious Representation of human Nature: Can a Man then hate his Brother, who is in all things like unto Himself? Can he injure the Community of which he is a Member, and not hurt Himself, or propose Self-Escape and Safety when the Destruction is general?

This is a short Sketch of the Nature and Obligation of this Duty, as it depends upon the Information of Reason. Man is, by the Inclination and Opinion of his own Mind, by the Good of Society, and his own particular Interest, which is inseparable from that of the Whole, and prospers or declines as the general Good does, and by Self-Sufficiency to attain Happiness, determin'd to have kind and charitable Thoughts of others, and to carry those Thoughts into
Action;

tion; to pity and set right every mistaken
 other, to assist every indigent one, and
 instead of giving a bad Word, or doing a
 bad Thing, to consult and endeavour their
 benefit in all possible Manner that is loving
 and courteous. There is both Reason and
 Beauty sufficient in this Representation to
 convince and attract every unprejudiced Per-
 son to the Admiration and Practice of this
 virtue; but as the Apostle hath stated and
 enforced it, the Description cannot be more
 fit or more elegant.

The Term *Charity* in the Text, is con-
 distinguishing'd to what is commonly, and
 the restrain'd Acceptation of the Word,
 call'd *Charity*. As by *that* is meant *Alms-*
giving, or a seasonable Relief of the Neces-
 sities of the *Hungry*, or *Thirsty*, or *Sick*, or
Naked, so by *this* is to be understood a
 cordial and effectual Love of Mankind, a
 respect for every one as a *Brother*, follow-
 ing *Peace with all Men*, bearing with each
 other in Gentleness, and forgiving in Sin-
 cerity and Chearfulness; measuring the same
 degree of Liberty to others, which we ex-
 pect ourselves in return, doing as we desire
 others should do to us, depriving no Man
 of Right to think, or act, as the Condition,
 Nature, or Ability of Understanding require;
 in a Word, avoiding every thing that breaks
 upon this *Temper*, whether it be an ill-
 natur'd Censure, an unjust Denial, Clamour,
 or

or Wrath, or ill Treatment, and expressing the most compassionate Feeling for human Errors, and extensive Benevolence to the Species, reserving to every one, from a Will influenc'd by a just Sense of Things, the true Principle of Duty, all Property strict and inviolable.

This is the *Charity that suffereth long, and is kind, that envieth not, nor is puffed up, that doth not behave itself unseemly, is not easily provoked, thinketh no Evil, rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth, beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, and that which shall never fail.*

There is one Branch of this most excellent *Grace*, to which the Apostle (by the Phrase of the Text, expressing great and fervent *Zeal* for the *Faith*) may seem to have an especial View; this is *Charity* with regard to the Opinions our Brother may have entertain'd in Matters of Faith or Duty, or Points of Religious Dispute.

We are not more warm in the Pursuit of Honour, or Riches, or Pleasure, than we are in the Maintenance of any thing we apprehend to be Religious, and as such, too sacred to be violated; in this good Cause, to be zealously affected is a Point of Reputation, as well as Duty.

But the Hatred, and Violence, and *Wrath of Man* will neither work the *Righteousness*, nor advance the Honour of God.

A rational Creature is in Duty so strictly bound, according to his Capacity, *to prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good*, that, to enjoin the Precept, and disallow the only proper Means of rationally complying with it, is an Absurdity not to be born, but that *Charity which beareth all things, and rejoiceth not in such Iniquity*, and Misapprehension of Things,

If a Brother has applied himself to the discovery of Truth in all due manner as became him; if neither the *Pride of Life*, nor the *Lusts of the Flesh* have hinder'd his Eyes from looking strait forward; if he desires not to be thought wise by Affectation of Singularity, nor has any secret Vice necessary to be screen'd, to engage his maintaining an opinion he knows to be wrong; and, if after all this Diligence and Impartiality, he should miss Truth, would it not be his Misfortune rather than his Fault? Would he deserve to be beaten with *any* Stripes? Or may he not put in a full Claim to all Forgiveness and Pity, to all tender and mild instruction, the most *Christian*, and at the same Time most effectual Method of Recovery?

Where this is the Case, Error is pitiable and pardonable, I had almost said, innocent, it would be, if it were (which is hard) even for a Man's self to determine in all the

the Circumstances of his Search) strictly voluntary.

Truth deserves our best Affection, and our utmost Care, and if, in spite of these, we err, and fix in a wrong Judgment, we shall not find the Disappointment fatal, nor justly incur Censure and Punishment.

In every Case of a truly conscientious Non-compliance with any establish'd Doctrine, or Way of Worship, let *Charity* intercede, to have it favour'd with a *Tolerance*; that the sincerely Erroneous may be attack'd and reduc'd by the Art of Persuasion; and the Power of Reason not violated and harden'd by the Force of unmerciful and cruel Treatment. And yet,

Even in the Judgment of *Charity* itself (take it in its full Extent and Latitude) the Manner of declining Truth, or maintaining Error may be *such*, (for Instance, when treated with *Rudeness* and *Drollery*) as to fall under the Cognisance of the *Civil Power* and justly merit a severe Animadversion from the *Magistrate* as the Guardian of the Honour of God, his Principal, and the public Good of the People, who can never be long either safe or happy, without the Influence of Religion and moral Virtue on their Conduct. It then degenerates, from Misapprehension and Defect of Understanding, into Perverseness of Will and Affection

from an ingenuous Search of Truth, into Scorn and Hatred of it, which are *Works of the Flesh*, and may be restrain'd by such Methods as are not fitted to produce Conviction and sincere Profession.

But how far the *Civil Magistrate* may think reasonable or proper to interpose, is left to his own Sentiments, who is to answer for the Trust lodged in him.

Let us put the Case in the strongest Terms, let us suppose Men to be (as many are) thro' real Scruple of Conscience, or (as many other) thro' Neglect, Prejudice, or Passion, in a wrong Way of Thinking or Acting in their religious Capacity; and then examine what are the Directions which *Christianity* affords us, to convert a Sinner from the Error of his Way.

There is a Precedent in this Kind of too much Authority to be oppos'd, and what every one, who not only calleth Him Lord, but doth as He saith, will think his Duty to conform to, as 'tis undoubtedly his Scandal and his Crime to depart from.

The Merciful and Holy *Jesus* behaved toward the *Samaritans* far differently to what those both give and receive from one another, who, under the solemn Engagement and Profession of *Brethren*, and *Hope* of inheriting the same Promises, are too often found beating, and wounding, and devouring each other,

The

The Refusal of the *Samaritans* to furnish Him and his Disciples with the ordinary Conveniences and Refreshments of Life, for no other Reason, but *because his Face was as though he would go to Jerusalem*, (the Place whither all the then Worshippers of the true GOD were bound to repair) was an Affront and Indignity, which the Author of the *Gospel of Peace* would not resent in so severe and terrible a Manner, as that of *calling down Fire from Heaven*.

The *Samaritans* were undoubtedly wrong and superstitious, and even idolatrous (as the learned Mr. *Mede* thinks) in their Manner of Worship, and treated that very Person most unworthily, who came to enlighten an ignorant World, and explain to Men what GOD was, and what was the true, spiritual Worship which He requires, and will accept at our Hands: Yet, neither could this their indecent Usage of Him and them, nor Zeal for his own excellent Design, carry him out of Character, *to destroy Mens Lives*, when the gracious Purpose of his Mission was to *save them*.

Two of his Disciples, *the Sons of Thunder*, were immediately for calling down Lightning to consume the inhospitable Village and its Inhabitants: They were probably not far from the Place where * *Elijah* had twice

* 2 Kings i. 10, 11, 12.

brought down Fire from Heaven on *King Abaziah's Captains, and their Fifties*, and this might enflame them with a Desire to make it again remarkable for *Judgment and fiery Indignation*.

But *He* who was *Meekness* itself, on this Occasion, and at such their Suggestion, rebuk'd them in *Severity*, * *Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of*: Ye do not rightly consider, or resolve upon the Matter, in a Manner suitable to the mild and affectionate Disposition of the Gospel of Peace and Love, which I came to declare, and ye are to propagate and diffuse throughout the Earth. This *Dispensation* of mine is intended for a Season of Goodness and Mercy, Long-suffering and Forbearance; there is a Time to come, when Sinners shall be ripe for Judgment: Now the *Son of Man* came not in Power, but in Humiliation, not in the *Glory of the Father*, but in the Frailty and Weakness of the human Nature, not to judge, but to save: Hereafter He shall appear as mighty to punish, as He is now to pardon, *coming in flaming Fire, to take Vengeance on them who know not God, and have not believed and obeyed the Truth*.

This single Instance, so apposite to this Species of *Charity*, deserves the Attention, and requires the Obedience of every *Church*,

* Luke ix. 55.

and every *Christian*, and may fully satisfy us, how wrong and cruel our great *Master* thought it, to attempt the converting, or reducing Men from Error to the Acknowledgment of the Truth, by any other than *spiritual Weapons*, the Arguments and rational Evidence of Gentleness and Persuasion, Admonition and Reproof, setting Truth and Error before them as *Moses* did *Life and Death, Blessing and Cursing* before the *Israelites*, and then leaving it to the free Determination of the Mind, under a full Apprehension of the Difference, to choose the *Good*, and refuse the *Evil*.

In this Way and Method, our *dear Lord*, acting in the Capacity of a *Prophet or Teacher come from God*, began to make *Profelytes*, and gain Men over to his Religion: He offer'd no kind of Force or Violence to compel them, but propos'd it to their Consideration or Choice, inviting them *to come unto Him*, and *follow Him*, with full Purpose of Heart and Assurance of the Truth.

As He offer'd no worldly Advantage to tempt and entice them, (for that had been directly opposite to the Nature of his *Kingdom*, which is spiritual and *not of this World*) so He used no kind of outward Terror, or Torture to awe them into a Compliance: All such Ways were contrary to the Nature of Man, to the Nature of all Religion, and especially his own, which suits its Argu-

nents to the Minds and Consciences of Men, with a pure Design to make them sincere Converts, not formal Hypocrites; and His Religion in Substance and Design is still the same, and must ever continue so, in our Thoughts, and in our Practice, to make us the *Disciples and Followers of Him*, such as He will own and reward in the last Day.

Whatever *Wood, Hay, or Stubble* Men may lay upon the old Foundation, whatever wrong and unworthy Notions may, by human Device, be blended into Religion, and taken for a Part of it, *these* cannot prosper, when *that* which is greater than *Faith and Hope* is excluded, and hath no Share in the System given of it. *The Religion from above is pure and peaceable*; the Gradation of Christian Virtues is consummated in *brotherly Kindness and Charity*. * *He that saith, he is in the Light*, or understandeth what Religion is, *and hateth his Brother, is in darkness*, and deceiveth himself, *even until now*. True *Piety and Charity* are inseparable, *Righteousness and Mercy, Truth and Peace* must dwell together, to fulfil the whole of the *Christian Law*, of *loving God and our Neighbour*.

St. Paul was a warm and impetuous Zealot for the Rigor of the *Law*, but from being a Persecutor and injurious, by the *Spirit of*

* 1 John ii. 9.

the *Gospel* was soften'd and form'd into Mildness and Candour: *Then* he became the greatest Advocate and the fairest Pattern of *Zeal* and *Charity* duely temper'd, sanctifying and quickening each other; and this Harmony of Affection for Truth and for Men is so indispensably necessary, that (in the Judgment of Him, *who had the Spirit of God*) all our Pretensions to Zeal, how powerful soever *it* might appear in every Act of Self-denial and Suffering, are declar'd and will be found to *profit us nothing, if we have not Charity*. Our earnest Contention for the Faith shall then only terminate in the Glory of God, and redound to our Benefit, when 'tis accompanied with Good-will towards Men.

I proceed now,

Secondly, To enquire (the proper Subject of this Day's Enquiry) how the Church of Rome hath receiv'd this Doctrine of our Apostle, and practis'd this great Duty; whether she hath *earnestly coveted this best Gift*, and walk'd in this most *excellent Way*.

'Tis suppos'd that a Man may voluntarily give his Body to be burned, and yet not have *Charity* in the Design of so doing; and certainly *they* can have none, who violently force others, contrary to their firm Persuasion, either to renounce the Truth, or endure the Flames: But, where it has prevailed and operated in Conjunction with Truth

Innocence and the Grace of God, the Cru-
 elty of the *Tormentor* has been outdone by
 the *Charity* of the *Martyr*, forgiving and
 praying for him. 'Tis the Efficacy and un-
 relenting Virtue of it, that makes it so excel-
 lent and valuable: But I am now to con-
 sider the State of them that have it not,
 or have not exercis'd it in Matters of reli-
 gious Difference; *where* the Neglect or
 Want of it, or acting in direct Opposition
 to it, must fall heavy to accuse and con-
 demn their Conduct, in Proportion to the
 excellent Nature, and necessary Obligation of
 the Duty.

They, the *Rulers* at least of the *Romish*
Communion, have acted so much like the
Jews, in conspiring against *Protestants*, as
 they did against *Paul* to slay him when a
Christian, fancied it to be so essential a Point
 of Religion to extirpate *Hereticks*, in order
 to promote the *Glory of God*, and the Ser-
 vice of *Mother Church*, that we may more
 safely trust this Point to be determin'd by
 their own Historians, and sit easy under
 what *they* relate, than run the Risque of
 being tax'd with Uncharitableness (the Cha-
 racter forbidden by the Text) in represent-
 ing, tho' truly and fairly, what has been
 done.

Religion has receiv'd much the same
 Treatment from the Members of that *Church*,
 which Mankind hath done from a Person

who * wanted neither Cunning nor Abilities, nothing but Good-nature and *Charity*.

He pictur'd Mankind as false and cruel, void of Confidence, and full of Jealousy, naturally and mutually desiring each other's Destruction, and lying in wait in secret Places seeking whom they might devour.

The *Church* of *Rome* has much in the same Manner misrepresented *Christian Religion*; so that upon a View of the *Tyranny* which it exercises over the Souls and Bodies of Men, and its rigid Demands to divest ourselves of *Humanity*, to do *God Service*, and become *true Sons* of the *Church*, it may, without Breach of *Charity*, be ask'd, Is this the Gospel of Peace? Can *Christianity* bear to be propagated and maintain'd at the Expence of *Charity* and Compassion, the very Essence and Perfection of it? Is this *pure and undefiled Religion*, which has been so deeply imbrued in the Blood of the Innocent? Is it not rather a Religion that *sends a Sword on Earth*, whence *Wars and Fightings* come as naturally, as from the *Lusts* of Ambition and Avarice?

The Precepts of the *Gospel* run all one Way, to make us tender of the Lives and Interests of Men, to try all mild and endearing Methods with the Sinful and Erroneous, to exert our best Endeavours with

* Mr. Hobbes.

Charity and Meekness of Wisdom, and to put up our Prayers to the GOD of Love for their Conversion and Establishment in the Truth.

This pure Doctrine was not at first planted by Force and Violence, nor can it ever want to be so defended; by its own native Lustre and Beauty it pervaded all Regions, and captivated the Hearts of Men of all Nations under Heaven, and will still prevail by the kind and condescending Deportment of its Professors and Well-wishers; and whatever Notes and Characters have been given of a *true Church*, the Want of *Charity* is an infallible Sign, that 'tis not found in its Vitals.

Nothing can be fairly alledg'd from holy Writ to justify or extenuate the Guilt and Abomination of a persecuting Spirit.

The Phrase in the Parable, * *Compel them to come in*, can by no just Rule of Construction mean any thing more than Dint of Argument and Importunity of Address, unless we would set the Doctrine of *Christ* at variance with his Practice.

The *Discipline* of a *Church* is warranted by divine Precept, to be exercis'd § *for the Destruction of the Flesh, (i. e.)* to reform the sinful Lusts of it, *that the Spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord*; but not to the taking

* Luke xiv. 23.

§ 1 Cor. v. 5.

away of natural Life, which is to send Men down quick into Hell, instead of *instructing them in Meekness that oppose themselves**, and waiting GOD's own Time, if *peradventure He will give them Grace to the acknowledging of the Truth.*

The Expulsion and utter Excision of the *idolatrous Nations* by Israel, the *People of God*, had been outrageously unjust, and betray'd the utmost *Cruelty of Persecution*, had they not receiv'd an expresse Commission from the *God of Heaven* for so doing; had they not been made (which was the Truth of the Case) Instruments in GOD's Hands, to execute *His* just Wrath and Vengeance upon them, who knew, and who only could fore-know them to be incorrigible, by all the Methods of Lenity and Forbearance.

No Man, no *Church* hath this Knowledge, or Right to judge others, and devote them as *Vessels fitted to Destruction.*

They then who have this bitter Zeal and Cruelty of Heart and Hand, however they may boast, will be found Liars against the Truth; *This Wisdom descendeth not from above, but 'tis the Charity of an Apostle* is earthly, sensual, devilish: 'Tis (as a § Great and Good Man hath compar'd it) like the Fire of Hell, all Heat and no Light,

* 2 Tim. ii. 25.

§ Archbp. Tillotson.

A Religion without *Good-nature* is worse than no Religion at all, is mere *Popery*: And shall we not rather be honest *Heathens*, and preserve our *Humanity*? But,

I must recall the Assertion of the Text, not only into Memory, but carry it also into Practice; for tho' the Matter of our *double Deliverance* on this Day, one from secret Villainy, the other from open Invasion upon every thing dear, both Religious and Civil, demands the Zeal of a *Protestant*, and the Resentment of an *Englishman*, yet if I have not *Charity*, *I am nothing*, my Religion is vain. *We* have departed from *Rome*, merely to preserve the Simplicity and Purity of *Christian* Doctrine and Worship, the most valuable Blessing we do, or can enjoy; and to the Honour of the *Protestant* Cause, under all the Provocation we have receiv'd, (as great as Cruelty could tempt *them* to give, or *Christianity* dispose *us* to bear) such is our Regard to the Judgment of *Charity*, that we allow to *them* (what they peremptorily deny *us*) a *Possibility of Salvation*.

But the *Duty* more suitable to our Deliverance, and a *Sacrifice* more acceptable to *Him*, by whose stretch'd-out Arm we were rescued, is, the Return of a joyful Heart, and thankful Lips, and virtuous Life.

Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name be the Praise, for thy Truth's sake, and because Thou hadst a Favour unto
us.

us. Continue, O God, thy Loving-kindness to us. Preserve the *King* from all secret Evil and open Violence; Give him the Hearts of all his People, and bow down before him the Necks of his Enemies; let *them* be cloathed with Shame and Confusion; but upon Himself and his *Royal Posterity* let the *Crown* for ever flourish. *Amen.*

